



<u>Cabinet Report</u>
<u>Date</u>
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<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

Shifnal Town Centre and Highways Improvement Scheme

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks the approval of Cabinet to proceed with the Shifnal Town Centre and Highway Improvement Scheme, that this report is considered by Cabinet and Full Council (subject to approval) due to the project costs exceeding one million (£1m+) and in accordance with the Councils Financial Rules, as laid out within this report.
- 1.2. The town's location in Shropshire in relation to Shrewsbury, Telford and Wrekin and the West Midlands provides an attractive mix for developers and house buyers. The geographical area of Shifnal has been subject to extensive housing development over previous years, circa 1100 dwellings have been built to date with a further 400 dwellings planned.
- 1.3. In response to the development opportunities allocated to Shifnal through Shropshire Council's Site Allocation and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan for construction between 2006 and 2026, Shropshire Council developed a Transport Strategy for Shifnal that considers cumulative impact and effect of all the proposed developments in Shifnal on the local highway network and determines a range of proposals for further investigation and development that will serve to manage the growth of vehicular and sustainable travel within the town.
- 1.4. The growth in development has created local concern in respect of the ability of the current infrastructure to support town growth. The town centre improvement project and improvements to the layout and positioning of town centre junctions will enhance the town centre about presentation, public realm in respect of its materials and town centre design.
- 1.5. The improvements to the town centre and public realm will enhance the existing infrastructure, by improving and in some areas reducing traffic flow and creating a more pedestrian friendly area, that can be utilised for community events and support local businesses. The work scheduled is: -
 - Realigning and improving capacity at key town centre road junctions
 - Highways resurfacing
 - Improving levels of footway surfaces
 - Hard and soft landscaping
 - Tree planting

- Improved town centre materials and colour palette
- Public Realm furniture

1.6. It should be noted that the intent (subject to approval) to proceed has received the support of:

- Highways and Transport
- Internal Infrastructure Group (IIG)
- Shifnal Town Council
- Shifnal Members
- The project is a Category A project in the current Shifnal Place plan. The scheme has been subject to public consultation, public meetings and the scheme design and its intended improvement for Shifnal has been agreed by all parties.

1.7 Shifnal has been subject to significant housing development. This has raised local concern relating to the wider impact upon the town and its associated infrastructure. Several integral internal groups such as IIG have supported this project and the project is a Category A project in the current Shifnal Place plan.

1.8 The summary cost of the scheme is:

Total cost of scheme	£2,716,779.00 (estimate, subject to tender)
Total CIL required	£1,887,779
Section 106 contribution	£ 829,000
Total cost of scheme	£2,716,779.00 (estimate, subject to tender)

1.9 The Section 106 contribution is already received and will fund junction improvements and redesigned highway layout in the town centre. CIL funding will improve the town centre, public realm as detailed on the attached design and is considered an appropriate use of CIL funding in accordance with national legislation and guidance.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That Cabinet recommend to Council approval of the Shifnal Town Centre and Highways Improvement Scheme and allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy funds for the Shifnal area of £1,887,779.00 and £829,000 of Section 106 funds for highway junction improvements for project delivery.

- 2.2. That Cabinet recommend to Council approval of a tender process and subsequent mobilisation to facilitate delivery of the Shifnal Town Centre Improvement Plan as supported with all parties.**
- 2.3. That Cabinet recommend to Council delegation to the Assistant Director of Infrastructure to amend the project as required in response to the tender outcome.**
- 2.4. That Cabinet recommend to Council approval of the necessary engagement and information process to deliver this project in association with Shifnal Town Council and wider Town groups as required.**

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3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1. This report seeks approval to deliver the Shifnal Town Centre Improvement Project. The project has support of been all parties (town council, local members and internally at Shropshire Council). The project is designed and has an indicative budget to proceed, the scheme will be submitted for tender for delivery and therefore the budget contingent upon the tender being received. How Covid will impact upon tender process is currently unclear and this aspect will require management and liaison with all parties as required, once the tenders are received.
- 3.2 The work is anticipated to begin in Summer 2021, and will last for approximately a year, the work will cause significant disruption to the town centre, and local members and the town council have been advised of this. A working group of town councillors, the town clerk and Shropshire Highways and transport staff has agreed to be developed to inform the engagement and information plan to support the town whilst this project is developed and delivered to plan, communicate the works effectively and deal with operational issues that arise.
- 3.3 The improvements to the town centre and public realm will enhance the existing infrastructure, by improving and in some areas reducing traffic flow and creating a more pedestrian friendly area, that can be utilised for community events and support local businesses. This will provide a safer environment, once work is complete, for people with physical and sensory disabilities, for older people, and for people with caring responsibilities such as families with small children, and people looking after adults with learning disabilities.
- 3.4 An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) has been carried out for this project. Please see Appendix A. The screening, for positive, neutral or negative impacts of this project for people in Protected Characteristic groupings as set out by the Equality Act 2010, and regarding social inclusion, has indicated the following:

- As per the above planned physical improvements to the public realm, there is an anticipated positive impact, once complete, for people with physical and sensory disabilities, for older people, and for people with caring responsibilities such as families with small children. These are primarily people in the groupings of Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex, and Social Inclusion.
- There is an anticipated negative impact for the same groupings whilst the work is ongoing, and it will be important to ensure that signage is as clear as possible, that there is wide enough access to shop premises etc for people in wheelchairs, and people with buggies, and that both temporary and permanent pavement surfaces do not pose slip risks for people with walking sticks etc
- The impact of Covid-19 in terms of current and projected social distancing requirements will also need to be factored in but could enhance impacts from an equality perspective through contractors ensuring there is wide enough physical access for pedestrians, mitigating against the noise, smell, and air quality health and wellbeing impacts for pedestrians whilst work is ongoing.
- Overall equality impacts are anticipated to be low to medium positive across all groupings once the work has been completed.

4. Financial Overview

4.1. The finance and budget for the project is laid out as follows:

As at 26 October 2020	£
Local Area CIL Fund Available	1,805,510.81
Less committed in Capital Programme:	
Shifnal St Andrews Primary School	-187,778.46
Shifnal Primary	-12,272.25
Uncommitted balance 31/03/20	1,605,460.10
Strategic Fund	332,473.918
Neighbourhood Fund Available	677,098.58
Shifnal Finance available summary:	
Section 106 contribution	829,000.00
CIL: Local Area Fund	1,605,460.10
CIL: Strategic Fund	332,473.91
Total Funds available	2,766,934.00
Estimated cost of Project	2,716,779.00
Remaining	50,155.00

- 4.2. The finances of this project have been estimated and are subject to tender. How COVID 19 may impact on tender outcomes is unclear, and as with any tender process the ability to amend the project in accordance with the finalised tender outcome is required, therefore a delegation to the Assistant Director of Infrastructure to amend the project in line with the tender is contained with the recommendations of this report.
- 4.3. The project and its necessary detail were presented to the Internal Infrastructure Group (IIG) for use of CIL funding. IIG supported the use of CIL for the project subject to approval at Cabinet and full Council.
- 4.4. The project costs have been forecast and will be subject to tenders being received. As the total cost of the project is significantly higher than £1,000,000, full council approval is required.
- 4.5. It should be noted that Shifnal Town Council approved the scheme and its design and project costs at their full council meeting in October 2020.
- 4.6. Shifnal Town Council also approved consideration of utilising neighbourhood CIL fund to support the project, once the tenders for the work have been received , it will need to be determined if this contribution is one of contributing to the project to ensure its delivery , or enhancing the project by additional public realm infra structure or increased specification , this issue will need to be resolved and then appropriate arrangements implemented once the position is understood .

5. Climate Change

- 5.1 The existing layout of the town centre has not developed in alignment with its current housing growth, extensive queuing at highway junctions, time awaiting at junctions and journey reliability times are all issues. This project will improve the junction issues and allow traffic to flow freely and prevent slowing, speeding of vehicles and related carbon emissions.
- 5.2 An improved town centre design, with landscaping and realigned layout will encourage increased pedestrian use, coupled with an improved public realm furniture and improved soft landscaping materials with additional trees to support the improvement of the town centre.

6. Background

- 6.1. The geographical area of Shifnal has been subject to extensive housing development over previous years, circa 1100 dwellings have been built to date with a further 400 planned. The town's location in Shropshire in relation to Shrewsbury, Telford and Wrekin and the West Midlands provides an attractive mix for developers and house buyers.
- 6.2. The growth in development has created local concern in respect of the ability of the current infrastructure to support town growth. The town centre improvement project and improvements to the layout and positioning of town

centre junctions will enhance the town centre about presentation, and public realm in respect of its materials and town centre design.

- 6.3. The approved design as agreed with the Town Council for the project is attached in Appendix B
- 6.4. The project has been in development for several years, in response to the development opportunities allocated to Shifnal through Shropshire Council's Site Allocation and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan for construction between 2006 and 2026. Shropshire Council developed a Transport Strategy for Shifnal that considers cumulative impact and effect of all the proposed developments in Shifnal on the local highway network and determines a range of proposals for further investigation and development that will serve to manage the growth of vehicular and sustainable travel within the town.
- 6.5. In 2014, several traffic mitigation options that were agreed with the Shropshire Council local Members for Shifnal were tested using a traffic growth simulation model and put forward for public consultation. No clear local support for any of the options was demonstrated.
- 6.6. In 2015, Shifnal Forward conveyed to Shropshire Council that there was notable support in Shifnal to investigate the potential for a street improvement scheme in the town that would create a pedestrian friendly and low-speed traffic environment. Shropshire Council agreed to support this proposal in principle and proceeded to commission investigation and design work in relation to a potential enhancement scheme for Shifnal town centre.
- 6.7. A local working group consisting of representatives from Shifnal Town Council and Shropshire Council was set up and has been used to test and steer the design throughout its progression. The scheme involves the reconfiguration of junctions, the reallocation of space to pedestrians, and improvements to the aesthetics of the street using high-quality materials, street furniture and additional tree planting.
- 6.8. This design work culminated in a public consultation event over two days in December 2015. The feedback provided by the public at this exhibition demonstrated significant local support for the enhancement scheme as presented. In summary, 241 people responded to the questionnaires and 84 percent of respondents supported the overall proposal to enhance Shifnal town centre. In response to a request by Shropshire Council, Shifnal Town Council subsequently confirmed their support for the scheme in October 2020.
- 6.9. Since 2015, Shropshire Council representatives have attended various stakeholder meetings with Shropshire Council Local Members, Shifnal Town Council and wider community groups. The scheme which was subject to public consultation in December 2015, was within the region of £3.5 - £4 million. It became apparent that due to other constraints, the amount of CIL expected would not cover the cost of the scheme.

- 6.10. Shropshire Council officers were invited to attend an extraordinary meeting of Shifnal Town Council on 14th January 2020 to present two value engineered options for the Shifnal Town Centre Improvement Scheme, with budget estimates of £2.0 million and £2.5 million which were intended to work within the current financial constraints.
- 6.11. Following the meeting, Shifnal Town Council agreed to provide formal feedback once they had an opportunity to consult with the wider community. Due to the coronavirus restrictions, Shifnal Town Council were not able to provide any formal feedback about the two options put forward. Whilst no formal feedback has been received, during the meeting held on 14th January 2020, several issues were raised by members of the Town Council. To progress the design, Shropshire Council commissioned WSP to make amendments such as retaining limited on street parking to the proposed scheme that incorporated some of the informal feedback received in January 2020, and subsequently developed 'Option 3', the approved design.
- 6.12. The final design and anticipated budget were then approved by Shifnal Town Council at their 15th October 2020 full council meeting and by Shifnal local Members. A letter confirming support for the project from the Town Clerk has been received. See Appendix C
- 6.13. Subject to approval, the project will be prepared for tender with an intent to begin work in late May 2021. This will allow all the necessary preparations to be considered and implemented and allow additional CIL funding to become available.
- 6.14. A working group of highways and transport staff and representatives of Shifnal Town Council will be formed to support this project. A project such as this will impact upon the town in respect of disruption including road closures, temporary traffic lights and loss of parking etc. and the ability to plan and prepare with local town councillors will ensure that any disruption is mitigated as far as possible and that communication is as effective as possible.
- 6.15. Typical improvement works will be: -
- Realigning and improving capacity at key town centre road junctions
 - Highways resurfacing
 - Improving levels of footway surfaces
 - Hard and soft landscaping
 - Tree planting
 - Improved town centre materials and colour palette
 - Public Realm furniture

7. Rationale supporting the use of CIL funding.

- 7.1. CIL income from new development must be spent by the Council "funding the provision improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area" in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended). "Infrastructure" is defined by section 216 of the 2008 Planning Act And includes but is not limited to roads

and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, and open spaces. Regard should also be had to the Government's National Planning Policy Guidance which states that, "local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area, and they will decide what infrastructure is needed. The levy is intended to focus on the provision of new infrastructure and should not be used to remedy pre-existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision unless those deficiencies will be made more severe by new development".

- 7.2. Shropshire Council recognises that infrastructure needs vary from place to place and priorities vary over time in response to different development pressures. Shropshire's infrastructure requirements are therefore detailed within Shropshire's Implementation Plan and supporting Place Plans. An annual process of review is well established for these which ensures widespread and continual engagement in identifying and prioritising Shropshire's infrastructure requirements both with the local community and local infrastructure and service providers. The Implementation Plan and supporting Place Plans therefore provide a robust evidence base to assist in the targeted use of developer contributions as well as a mechanism for coordinating all available resources around an agreed set of priorities within a place.
- 7.3. The annual review of the Implementation Plan and Place Plans, thereby ensuring the infrastructure requirements to be delivered through CIL are informed by local evidence of need and based on robust local consultation.
- 7.4. The Shropshire Place Plans are documents which bring together a range of information about a defined area, including the identified infrastructure needs of settlements and their relative priority. They are developed in collaboration with local parish and town council and infrastructure providers. They include a focus on local needs such as highways, flood defences, educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreational facilities and open spaces. The Shropshire Local Infrastructure Plan provides a composite of the needs identified in the Place Plans with a focus on the highest priority issues, including those critical needs necessary to ensure development can happen
- 7.5. It should be noted that the Shifnal town centre and highways improvement plan is a key Category A project in the published Shifnal Area Place Plan and in respect of this project this includes for
 - Wider footpaths
 - Hard and soft landscaping
 - Traffic Speed reduction infrastructure
 - Public realm movements to the town centre in respect of improvements for pedestrians and public furniture, cycle provision and walking routes.
- 7.6. Shifnal Town Council are considering supporting infrastructure with the use of their Neighbourhood CIL allocation this is not yet confirmed but infrastructure

and provision of electric charging points, improved signs and way intending are being considered and will be confirmed in due course subject to necessary liaison and agreement for the use and approve CIL funds.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Shifnal has been subject to significant housing development. This has raised local concern relating to the wider impact upon the town and its associated infrastructure. Several integral internal groups such as IIG have supported this project and the project is a Category A project in the current Shifnal Place plan. Should approval be provided, this project will address demands development has placed on the area by improving the local town centre in respect of its public realm, aid the safety and comfort of pedestrians across a range of demographics, and improve the layout of its key highway junctions to support the scheme. It is considered appropriate to use CIL monies to fund part of this project for the reasons given in this report

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Councillor Steve Davenport
Local Members – All local members affected. Councillor Bird and Turley
Appendices Appendix A - ESSIA for the proposed project and works Appendix B - Approved Shifnal Town Centre Improvement Design Appendix C - Letter of support from Shifnal Town Council.